

# Victory Breeds Enmity and the Vanquished Is Plunged In Grief

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Whether we begin with the Pearl Harbour incident of more than fifty years ago, or end up with the retaliatory counter blasts of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which came in its wake, we are undeniably stressing one basic thing about human nature. We humans not only do not wish to admit defeat, and that while at times we do well deserve it, but also are always keen on crushing another and feeling triumphant all the time. This is what destroys peace and happiness in the world, every time and everywhere, in the home and in society at large. This is what breeds hatred, rivalry and sustained enmity, sometimes from generation to generation.

These more than absurd notions of victory and triumph are propelled by the insatiable desire of mankind, in whatever group they are, to impress upon others each one's greatness. This desire to measure up oneself against the stature of the other springs up in the wells of egotistic considerations and notions of self-pride. It is very true with the humans that no one likes to play the second fiddle. But it is equally true that most people are not suited to do anything better. Awareness of such situations as these, coupled with an indispensable sense of honesty, should stimulate everyone to study seriously human nature within ourselves to put us in better relation with those around us. What better meditation or *bhāvanā* than this, call it *samatha* or *vipassanā*.

Life being what it is in the world of the humans, looking out for success of a more stable and more rewarding type, Buddhism analyses this concept beautifully in the Dhammapada [See verse 201]. It says: Victory breeds enmity: *jayaṃ veraṃ pasavati*. For he whom you crush and defeat and triumph over cannot continue to be your friend. Herein lies the genesis of enmity and hatred.

Forget not these Dhammapada verses [Nos. 3 & 4] which sum up these bases of hostility as abuse and accusation [*akkocchi maṃ*], assault [*avadhi maṃ*] and plunder and dispossession [*ahāsi me*].

*Akkocchi maṃ avadhi maṃ ajini maṃ ahāsi me*

*Etaṃ upanayhanti veraṃ tesaṃ na sammati* Dhp. v.3

The Dhammapada verse referred to above [No. 201] is equally aware that he who suffers defeat in his quest for victory is plunged in grief at the same time: *dukkhaṃ seti parājito*. In fact, in the context where this verse occurs, it is said that King Pasenadi Kosala lost three times in his battle against his nephew Ajatasatru. Every time he found himself more bitter and increasingly depressed [DhpA. III. 259]. It is said that on the third occasion he decided to terminate his life by starving himself to death [*Kim me jīvitena 'ti āhārūpacchedaṃ katvā mañcake nipanno*].

It is the ability to get beyond such notions of victory and defeat which enables one to have peace within oneself: *upasanto sukhaṃ seti*. One has to get beyond these conflicting dualities: *hitvā jaya-parājayaṃ*. It is certainly within the reach of humans. We must not dodge it. That is the full implication of the concept of *upasama*. It means a balanced attitude. That one does not run into situations of being gripped by the one or the other. But on the other hand, it is the supremacist notions we entertain of ourselves in the world today as supreme power blocs like democrats and communists or as world dominating super grade religious institutions which drive us crazily through these hazardous tracks. Such notions are the outcome of self-evaluation and self-upgrading through our own mind-made measurements. Very often, these are no more than cultural hallucinations and are derived through myths and legends of religion. Buddhism's name for this pathological process of both aggressive and competitive measuring is *māna*. This psychopathic behavior does run in both directions of superiority and inferiority, upgrading and downgrading. One measures oneself as being superior [i.e. *seyyo*] or inferior [*hīno*] to another person whom one picks up as the object

of comparison.

It is this unyielding nature of the average human mind which refuses to accept any one else to be higher than oneself which makes humans despise fellow humans. In the Theragatha, we discover Thera Mahakassapa referring to such a man as ' walking with his head in the clouds, believing himself to be better than others ' [*Patthaddha-gīvo carati aham seyyo ' ti maññat*. Thag. v. 1074]. This is why there is special self-corrective provision built in, specially in the Metta Sutta, requiring and calling upon humans never to despise others on any account: *n ' ātimaññetha kattha ci naṃ kañci*. Born of race or clan superiority, or a conceit of one's affluence, people may think little of other people. Buddhism calls this a socially corroding vice or an item of *parābhava*.

*Jātitthaddho dhanatthaddho gottatthaddho ca yo nro*

*Sam ñātiṃ atimaññeti taṃ parābhavato mukhaṃ.*

Sn. v. 104

It is widely prevalent in the world today, operating in a very wide range like ethnicity, religious supremacy and political ideology. Self-conceit inevitably shuts out tolerance or mutual respect for one another within these areas.

Today we are more or less on the doorstep of the twenty-first century. Can we call upon the world today to look back on its activities during this century? It has to be honestly judged as a century whose dead weight we would love to soon get rid of. Wars in the name of God or man has to be totally rejected as being completely unacceptable. Two world wars of dreadful magnitude have been fought almost within a quarter century and everybody everywhere has realized how menacing they have been. That a blasted Germany or a ravaged Hiroshima has been, perhaps in less than a decade, restored to more than its normalcy does not and should not make the men and women of today forget the latent bestiality of humans and the possibility of their descent to much lower depths, secretly or overtly. It is happening right now, all over the world, in our own land as well as elsewhere.

Underneath these there has been then, and there is equally well now, arrogance of ethnic and political superiority. Elsewhere, devastating expressions of religious arrogance from time to time, are not unknown. Many fantastic tales are being told in defense of these. To these are also, at times, clumsily added a good deal of meaningless so-called cultural paraphernalia, each one in turn claiming superiority over the others. In both these World Wars I and II, there sat on the two sides of the English Channel, the English and the Germans. Beneath this confrontation lay a massive racial or ethnic hostility. In the World War II, the Allies, with whom there sat the English, were able to bring together more varied groups with different loyalties. It has always been possible to put to the fore an imaginary and not so real unity of purpose whereby one can camouflage a good segment of our credulous world. In the cold war, it was the antagonism of political ideologies, particularly the then known Soviet bloc in opposition to western Democracies.

Out of what once were collective groups, ethnic or political, there also emerged monstrously powerful single individuals like Adolf Hitler of Germany and Benito Mussolini of Italy. Assuming unduly large proportions and consequently exerting unjustifiable pressure on others for acceptance of their self-justified positions and policies, these men paraded too far. In the name of justice, they had to collapse and crumble to dust under the violence of their own venom. These, we would legitimately call phenomena of historical justification. They repeatedly happen in history, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

We in Sri Lanka have just completed fifty years since the colonial rulers have let go their grip on us. Since then, and during these fifty years what have we nurtured as our own in this land? What have the rulers left for us as a heritage? We have no doubt that these questions have been asked and that answers to them have been given. But the answers have to be tested and checked for their accuracy and honesty and also for their implications. Are they factually true? The future of our country and our people depend totally on them. At world level, even the very big blunders in the construction of the Hubbell's Space Telescope were

detected and discovered within the first five years while it was still spinning in outer space. And the defects were put right in much less time. And mind you, those responsible for the manufacturing defects were severely dealt with.

Now that we have taken this opportunity to make a few observations about the situation in Sri Lanka after fifty years of independence, and that in a Poya day sermon, let me address a few words to you on its propriety. I get for you all the necessary evidence direct from the horse's mouth, i.e. from works of scriptural authority. I do this with a seriousness hitherto unknown. Let me honestly tell you that we have now come to the end of our tether of patiently listening at times to sheer bluff from certain academic circles, put out in the name of high quality scholarly products of great distinction. Either they talk in blissful ignorance of what they are dealing with or in sheer mischief of misleading those who know much less on the subject. The academic world today is disgustingly studded with stumps of such bulldozed research in many areas of study such as history, religion and culture. Any clumsy situation or nakedly untenable and unacceptable position is vociferously defended, by all manner of people, pouring out from everywhere.

Here is a solid good example of such gross error. This pertains to the field of Buddhist opinion on the relationship of state and religion. The plain question is 'Has statecraft or the business of running a government anything to do with religious thinking or Dhamma'? Let alone the answer to this from the Buddhist point of view, no matter what our own contemporary rulers say. People of all ranks in this part of the world would want us to believe that the entire English speaking world shuts religion out of statecraft. This is not the truth. This is highly propagandist jargon. It serves well to drug people in this manner. The stultifying effect of this kind of thinking in Sri Lanka has been much worse than the menace of opium in China. Even with the recent opening of the information highway, and valuable and enlightening news coming our way, our people in this country seem to accept, with a deadening passivity, whatever is forced down our throats. Blind leading the blind seems to be accepted as a very comforting position. In effect,

we are no better than a nation of drug addicts.

For decades now we have been stressing that in Buddhism, the concept of state and religion is very clearly studied and enunciated. In Buddhism, the Dhamma is the very down to earth sheet anchor of social justice. All social administration, including government, must be founded and grounded on Dhamma. This does not amount to ecclesiastical strangle hold of the state machinery by church personnel. It is the Dhamma that dictates and not the clergy. It is therefore stupid use of the English language to coin such words like Dharmacracy. It is born of utter ignorance and sheer viciousness. Dharma is to be used like the Bank of England against which the dud notes of government must be tested. It is there where the lies have to be nailed to the counter. This process of detection and correction of governmental procedure can often be painful to governments. But here it is as authentic Buddhist texts would have it for you. See it for yourself.

Dignified and commendable statecraft is referred to in Buddhist texts as *Ariya-cakkavatti-vatta* [See Digha Nikaya III. 61. Cakkavattisihanada Sutta]. It is further defined as that ' which is based on the Dhamma, is pursued with adequate respect and honour to the Dhamma' [*dhammaṃ yeva nissāya dhammaṃ sakkaronto dhammaṃ garukaronto dhammaṃ mānento ...loc.cit*]. The text insists that nothing in the state should happen which does not accord with the Dhamma [*Mā ca te tāta vijite adhamma-kāro pavattittha. loc.cit.*]. Mark these words and treat them with the respect they deserve. Leave no room for later repentance. There is no statecraft outside the Dhamma. Rule of law in the land, according to Buddhism, is definitely not heaven decreed. It grows out of the human community, out of the needs of the men, women and children and the birds and beasts who inhabit the land, down here.

To further safeguard this Dhamma-based statecraft here is what our Suttas have to say. On this occasion we are glad to take this opportunity to elucidate a very crucial point. Here we are going to quote extensively from our Cakkavattisihanada Sutta. A word of explanation is needed here. The first

English translation of this Sutta is in the Dialogues of the Buddha Part III. p.62f. [Translated by T.W.Rhys Davids and published in 1921]. It is very unfortunate that the translation of this portion of the text is totally unacceptable. It gives a completely opposite meaning. A second translation of this same text done by Maurice Walshe in 1987 [A Wisdom Intermediate Book] is equally bad or even worse. I reject both English translations. We have a serious fear that these incorrect translations could have misled many scholars and researchers. Much worse if they did send many self-righteous statesmen, even in our own country, up the gum trees. We hope to undertake a field survey of this elsewhere.

Here is my own translation.

"O Son, whoever there be in your kingdom recluses and Brahmins who do not slip into moments of neglect, who are patient and polite, who discipline themselves, restrain themselves, who attain serenity, you must go to them from time to time and question them. What O Sirs, is wholesome action, what is unwholesome action? What is correct and what is incorrect? What should be done and what should not be done? What when done leads to unhappiness and disaster and what when done leads to happiness and welfare for long?

Having heard from them, you should avoid that which is unwholesome and take to the practice of what is wholesome. This O Son, is the dignified and commendable statecraft."

Here we give you for your own scrutiny what we consider the incorrect translations.

"And when, dear son, in thy kingdom men of religious life, renouncing the carelessness arising from the intoxication of the senses, and devoted to forbearance and sympathy, each mastering self, each calming self, each perfecting self, shall come to thee from time to time, and question thee concerning what is good and what is bad, what is criminal and what is not, what is to be done and what left undone, what line of action will in the long run work for weal or for woe, thou shouldst hear what they have to say, and thou shouldst

deter them from evil and bid them take up what is good. This, dear son, is the Ariyan duty of a sovran of the world" [Dialogues of the Buddha III.p.62]

It is lamentable that sixty-six years later, Maurice Walshe in his highly esteemed, new translation of the above, esteemed by many eminent monks, is as much off the mark as the former. Here is Maurice Walshe in Thus Have I Heard, at page 397

"...if from time to time they should come to you and consult you as to what is wholesome and what is unwholesome...you should listen, and tell them to avoid evil and do what is good."

See for yourself the new translator slavishly and blindly copying, almost verbatim, every mistake of the pioneer. At least I expect you listeners should have no difficulty in detecting this perfect howler wherein the order of the Buddhist injunction is disastrously reversed. In our opinion, a very idiotic position of the rulers being advised to correct the monks.

The Buddhist stand is that every Buddhist ruler must confirm to the clearly and explicitly enunciated Buddhist norms in governing a country. If the rulers err in their governance, either on account of their ignorance or their unethical immoral behavior, they must always go to the religious men, the persons who are the prime source of the Dhamma who are precisely introduced above and seek their assistance to correct themselves and rectify their state policies.

One last word. In recent years, in many parts of the world, religions apparently have overstepped their boundaries. In their craze for worldly power, religions have attempted to get a strangle hold on the state or the rulers. In such situations, one is not at all surprised that rulers on their part, in a move for self-defense, have vigorously endeavored to kick clerical power off the ring. But the clergy in Buddhism are neither vested with nor have any claim for such power. Rulers are required to prevail upon them for such direction of policy, by virtue of their Dhamma competence.

This need to season statecraft with mature and wholesome religious [or

spiritual if you like], wisdom is being felt in the more mature and learned thinking in the world today. You cannot turn your back on this. More and more pressure is being applied in this area. It is not possible for political ideologies of one type to mock at communist or socialist states saying that they are divorced from religious considerations and for themselves to adopt a policy of separating religious thinking from statecraft.

Let us remind all those in this country who need further edification in these areas that studies like *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* [1994. Edited by Douglas Jhonston and Cynthia Sampson. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press] should be an eye-opener to all of them.

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